

medium [(universal collection medium)], wherein the cells or tissue contained in the medium can be analyzed directly by both cytological and molecular methods, wherein the molecular method of analysis comprises either RNA or DNA or protein analysis or the analysis of both RNA and DNA, and wherein the medium is water based and comprises a preservative, a cross-linking agent and an anti-degradation agent.

(amended) The universal collection medium of claim 1 wherein the universal collection medium comprises a buffer component, at least one alcohol component, a cross-linking agent and an agent to inhibit degradation of at least one of the group consisting of RNA, DNA, and protein.

15. (amended) The universal collection medium of claim 5, wherein the agent to inhibit degradation of at least one of the group consisting of RNA, DNA, and protein comprises at least one agent selected from the group consisting of a nuclease inhibitor, a protease inhibitor and a chelating agent.

16. (amended) The universal collection medium of claim 15, wherein the agent to inhibit degradation of at least one of the group consisting of RNA, DNA, and protein comprises a chelating agent.

17. (amended) The universal collection medium of claim 15, wherein the chelating agent is selected from the group consisting of murexide, chromotropic acid, 1-(1-hydroxy-2-naphthylazo-2-hydroxy-5-nitronaphthalene-4-sulphonic acid, EDTA (ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid), o-phenanthroline, and thiourea.

18. (amended) The universal collection medium of claim 15 [12], wherein the chelating agent comprises EDTA (ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid).

20. (amended) A universal collection medium comprising water, a preserving agent, a buffer, a cross-linking agent and an agent capable of inhibiting the degradation of at least one of the group consisting of RNA, DNA, and protein.

24. (amended) A method of cell sample collection that allows detection of cell morphology and quantitative analysis of at least one of the group consisting of RNA,